

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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Bird Homes

By L. W. Brownell

WONDER if any of my young readers, when they see a bird's nest hanging from some branch, or set in the crotch of some tree, ever stop to think what a really wonderful thing it is. The very next time that one of you is lucky enough to find one, after the young have flown, take it from its resting place, for the birds will have no more use for it, and examine it well. Do you think that any of you, or any grown person, with all the tools which the ingenuity of man can supply, could ever reproduce it? And yet it is made by two little creatures, so small that one squeeze of the hand could crush them, with no other tools than those given them by God, — their feet and bills. The nest of a bird is really a thing of great beauty and symmetry and the building of it a piece of considerable labor on the part of the birds. I once dissected the nest of a red-eyed vireo and found that it was made of one thousand and one hundred and eighty-six pieces. When we realize that every one of these pieces must have been carried by the birds to the nesting site, some from a considerable distance, and woven separately into the fabric of the nest, and that it was all done in from two to three days, we can begin to understand how hard the little creatures must have had to work. The nests of some of the birds



Nest of Baltimore Oriole
(Hole cut to show eggs)

are much more elaborate and contain more material. That of the Baltimore oriole, a beautiful hanging bag, contains between two and three thousand pieces.

How do birds learn to build a nest? That they must acquire the knowledge in some manner between the time that they leave the nest in which they were reared and the next spring when they build one of their own is certain, for it is a fact that the first nest built by a pair of young birds is almost, if not quite, as perfect as are those that are built by older, more experienced, birds. Moreover, each species of birds follows its own peculiar design of architecture and this design never varies although the material used some-

times does. Imitation and instinct are the two teachers that guide the birds in their nest-building activities. Although it has been the popular idea that instinct was entirely responsible, it has been learned that this is not true, that imitation is the greater of the two teachers.

Nests are built solely for use, to hold the eggs and young until they are old enough to care for themselves. In choosing the material for the nest and the site where it is to be built the main object is to hide it as well as possible from natural enemies. Even those birds that build no nest at all, such as the shore birds that lay their eggs on the bare beaches, or the night-hawks and whippoorwills that lay theirs on the ground of the woods, are following the same law, for their eggs are so marked that they are difficult to distinguish from their surroundings without a nest as a background.

Nests are of almost every size and form from the tiny jewel built by the humming bird, only about an inch and a half across, to the enormous nest of the bald eagle which is five or six feet broad and as many deep. They are built everywhere in almost every possible situation. They are found on the ground and even beneath its surface; in low bushes and the topmost branches of the tallest trees; on the sands of the shore and the ledges of the highest cliffs; from the depths of the lowest, most dismal swamps and marshes to the limit of



Nest and Eggs of Orchard Oriole



Eggs of Killdeer Laid on Bare Ground

vegetation on the highest mountains; from the sun-scorched desert and treeless plain to the deepest forest, where the sun's rays seldom penetrate, and from the equator nearly to the poles, or at least to the outskirts of eternal snow and ice. No matter where we go we can find birds' nests if we search for them.

Birds may well be named after the various trades of mankind so far as their nest-building ability is concerned. There are the miners represented by the kingfishers, bank-swallows and burrowing owls, which dig tunnels in the earth ending in a large chamber in which they lay their eggs. The woodpeckers are pretty good carpenters for, using their bills as chisels, they make deep holes in the limbs and trunks of dead — and sometimes even living — trees in which to make their homes. They sometimes line the bottom with a little soft material but more often lay their eggs directly upon the chips that have accumulated during the boring of the hole and the young must make themselves as comfortable as possible on this rather rough bed. Some of the thrushes, and particularly the flamingo of the south, use a clayey mud in the building of their nests which dries very hard and these birds may well be called masons. The Baltimore and orchard orioles of our country, and the weaver birds of Africa and India are wonderful weavers. There is a small bird in India whose name is tailor bird. He is small, not much larger than our little house wren, but he actually sews together several large leaves to form a bag in which to build his nest. His bill is the needle and the long, tough vegetable fibres, stripped from a number of different plants, form the threads. Our little marsh wren is a wonderful plaiter of reeds and there is no basket maker than can hope to equal the skill of the vireos whose cup-shaped nests, woven of strips of grape and other vine bark, grasses, etc., are real beauties. The barn-swallows were the first brick makers, mixing straw with clay with which to make their nests, and the cliff swallows, with their bottle-shaped nests of clay, may be said to be the first pottery makers. The chimney swifts are joiners who use a glue that they themselves produce with which to stick together the twigs used in the construction of their nests and fasten the whole to the inside of the chimney. There are cousins of our swift, who live in the Andaman and Molucca Islands, that build their nests completely of a sticky substance that comes from glands in their throats and which hardens almost immediately upon coming into contact with the air. These are the nests from which the famous "birds' nest soup," much prized by the Chinese, is made. These birds might readily be called the original noodle makers.

In Australia there are birds that actu-

ally build incubators, mounds of rotting vegetable matter that, when acted upon by the intense rays of the sun, become warm enough to hatch the eggs that are laid in them. This would seem to show the extreme of laziness on the part of the parents but we have in this country a bird that is even lazier. This is the cowbird who will not even take the trouble to build a nest for its eggs and young or hatch the former after they are laid. She prefers to lay them in the nest of some other, usually smaller, bird and pay no further attention to them. The European cuckoo is guilty of doing the same thing.

The Cat and the Captain

BY ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

CHAPTER VIII

SUSANNAH brought in the tea on a big red tray from China. The teapot was shaped like an elephant, with steam coming from his trunk. Ted-Ted loved it. The cream came in a pitcher like a bright brown cow with her tail curled for a handle. Ted-Ted was so little he sat on a stool near the fire and held his cup in both hands. The grown-up people drank real tea, but Ted-Ted had only a spoonful of tea mixed with a great deal of milk. Susannah smiled from ear to ear. She loved tea parties. She had made little cookies shaped like fish, with caraway seeds for eyes, and big cookies filled with raisins, and cup-cakes. But the cup-cakes didn't have any frosting on them because most of the frosting was on the kitchen floor and the rest was in the Cat. Susannah told the Captain's daughter just how bad that cat was.

"We must call him for Ted-Ted to play with," said the Captain's daughter who always laughed at Susannah's stories of the Cat.

"Yo'd bes' leave him whar he is, mum," said Susannah.

"Oh, cats are always good with little children," said the Captain's daughter, who knew a great deal about cats.

"Kitty, kitty," said Ted-Ted who had been listening.

"Well, well, where is he?" asked the Captain, pleased that they wanted to see his cat.

"He was walkin' right on air, boss, the las' I see of him," said Susannah with a sniff.

The Captain opened the door and called. "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty! Here, kitty, kitty, kitty! Come, puss, puss, puss!"

The Cat's head appeared over the edge of the verandah roof. He was delighted at being called but he tried to appear unconcerned. He looked at the Captain, then slid down the verandah pillar, walked into the house, past Susannah as though he didn't see her, and right up to the Captain's daughter. She

knew what cats like. She tickled him under the chin and rubbed his back and sang nonsense to him under her breath.

"Cat, cat (she sang), it's perfectly evident

You are a calico cat,
And your eyes are a pair of under-clothes' buttons

Sewed on with a black thread, at that.

"Cat, cat, it's perfectly evident

Your whiskers are made out of string.
Someone's tangled up those on the left
of your nose

Which I think is a rather good thing.

And, cat, that magnificent pout of your chest

Just shows all the sawdust that's in it—

I must teach you your place as a little doorstep

At least for the half of a minute!"

At first when Ted-Ted came near the Cat ran away. He really thought Ted-Ted was a man who was very little (for he wasn't used to children), and seeing such a *very* little man reaching out such a *very* little hand somehow scared him. But pretty soon he got used to it. Ted-Ted poured milk from the brown cow's mouth into a saucer. Then the Cat settled down and tucked his paws under the saucer neatly and very carefully lapped up the milk, keeping his whiskers dry. The last drop was on his chin. He licked it off, wet the back of his right paw to smooth his shining fur, and then lightly jumped up on the Captain's lap and poked his head under the Captain's hand to be petted, which was very unusual for him to do in company. Ted-Ted leaned against the Captain's knee to listen to the Cat purring. It was better than the ticking of a watch. "How happy they all look," thought the Captain's daughter. "It would make a pretty picture."

"His engine's going," said Ted-Ted, whose father had an automobile, and they all laughed.

But the grown-ups began talking about other things and the Cat grew sleepy and forgot to purr. "His engine's stopped," said Ted-Ted in his little voice. But the Captain didn't hear exactly what he said and only patted him on the back and said "Yes, yes," kindly. The Cat's big black tail hung near Ted-Ted's hand with a little curl at the tip of it. "I'll crank him," said Ted-Ted helpfully. If only the Captain had heard that time! But again he just said "Yes, yes," and went on talking with his daughter. Ted-Ted gave one crank and then everything happened at once. The Cat yowled, the Captain said "Bless my soul!" in a loud voice, the Captain's daughter cried "What did you do, Ted-Ted?" Ted-Ted began dropping tears on five pink scratches on

his hand, and Susannah popped her head into the door and then without any questions ran for the broom. Which was really unfair of Susannah, for this time the Cat had really meant to be as good as gold at the tea-party to which he had been invited.

(To be continued)

The Bookshelf

Books suggested by Miss Elsie L. Lustig.

There are three splendid books for boys which have recently come to my attention. *SCOUTING IN THE DESERT* by Everett T. Tomlinson is the first one which I would like to tell a little about. The scene opens in the desert of New Mexico, and we are introduced to Jack Burns, eighteen years old, and Steve Lait. The boys are riding horseback, thinking about a cattle raid which had taken place the previous night. The book centers about these boys, and tells of the stirring days when Pancho Villa, the notorious bandit, was terrorizing the Mexican border. Jack and Steve are accepted as scouts by the American troops ordered across the border in pursuit of Villa and headed by General Pershing. The narrative tells of exciting brushes with the Mexicans, of a forced landing from an aeroplane, and of the flight back to Texas. It tells also how the two boys made their report to General Funston, known to his soldiers as "The Little Guy," and how the famous general attaches them to his forces as Funston's Scouts. There are thirty chapters; each one of them is exciting and full of thrills. You will do well to read this book.

THE RELIEF PITCHER by Ralph Henry Barbour gives us an exciting year in the life of Arnold Chase at Channery. The first excitement comes in a basketball game when Arnold plays with the team despite a badly wrenched ankle. Of course he cannot play as well as usual, and so the game goes to the rival school. The story shows how Arnold is made to see that he should have reported his injury and left it to the coach to decide whether or not he should play. There is an amusing chapter telling how Arnold learns to snow-shoe — his first experiment being on the dormitory corridor. Then spring comes; Arnold returns a few days late after vacation and so misses some baseball practice, and is in wrong with the school. He is transferred from the first to the second team, but pockets his pride and works so well that towards the close of the season he is in splendid form. The story reaches a climax in the final baseball game with Parkman School, Channery's big rival, when Arnold is called into the box in an attempt to save the score. What happens? You must read the book yourself and find out. Only I'll



THE CROW'S NEST

BY
WAITSTILL
HASTINGS
SHARP

Text: Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.—Amos 5:24.

WHEN we travel back along the dusty road of Time to the days of old, when ruled Tiglath-Pileser I and when Caius Julius Caesar led his legions across the Rubicon, we often say:

"Rome and Assyria were great nations!"

And then we look up to the map and run our eyes over this land of ours from Lewiston to Los Angeles, from Pensacola to Portland. What things are produced and refined and manufactured and offered to all the people *as never before*.

Education—free public schools, teaching every subject you can think of; foods, from the end of the earth; cotton; wool; the right to vote; steel; freedom of religious thought; books by the million; electricity; hospitals, saving pain, saving life; transportation—a chance to move *yourself* by train, automobile, airplane, and steamship; freight—a chance to move your property to where another man can buy it; communication—a chance to move *your ideas* by wireless, telegraph, telephone, mail and airplane mail; public health.

So I say again that we are living in the greatest of nations because more people under the flag of the United States of America have a better chance for living at their best than have the people of any other nation. And all we have to do is to reach out our hands in the right way and share in this wealth. Isn't it wonderful to be alive and to

assure you that the ending will not disappoint you!

THE BOYS' BOOK OF AMUSEMENTS by A. Frederick Collins is for boys who like to *make* things; who like to *do* stunts. I'll just give you a list of the chapters, for the headings speak for themselves. Fun With Matchsticks; Indoor Games, Old and New; Puzzles and Paradoxes; Eye-Twisters and Brain-Bewilderers; Hocus-Pocus Stunts; Simple Conjuring Tricks; Easy Scientific Amusements; Parlor Pyrotechnics; Second Sight and Thought Reading; Sells and Give-Aways; Some Good Party Diversions; Revels,

look ahead to see things happening during the next fifty years?

We are at peace with all the world; ships from all the ports of earth are sailing to and from our harbors; men from across the waters are coming to visit us and to shake hands with our governors on the capitol steps; thousands of our boys and girls are going abroad to see ancient cities and friendly peasants. We are taking down our telephone receivers in New York and are talking with London and Paris.

This is peace—these are the rich things of friendship.

Here are men and women at their best; here are nations at their best; here is the world at its best. This is peace—trading in the markets, and talking across oceans, and buying souvenirs; here are a billion people thinking the best of each other. This is what a Cockney calls "A little bit o' hall right."

And what is happening now if we have a little dispute with another people? This is our ideal:

To put on a table paper and ink and a pen for every man, to set chairs for the delegates and to talk over our differences. There is the recipe for peace!

And isn't that the finer, cheaper, quicker, safer, and only way of doing it? And we just have to come to it in the end. You can't name a war that did not end around the green table where it should have been argued out.

Which is the better to meet a man with:

A pen? . . . or a bayonet?

A block of writing paper? . . . or a hand grenade?

Where will you find a man at his best

Sitting at a table? or

Hiding in a trench?

I wonder how you boys and girls are thinking about the boys and girls of other lands? Don't you want to grow up with them, and go to visit them, and buy souvenirs from them—and find them at their best? I do. I am "going over" this summer to pick up some Quimper china.

Masquerades and Carnivals. Here you will find information about almost anything from phantom motor cars to whiskers, mustaches, and wigs. Don't forget the name of this book — *THE BOYS' BOOK OF AMUSEMENTS*.

Scouting in the Desert. By Everett T. Tomlinson. New York. D. Appleton & Co.

The Relief Pitcher. By Ralph Henry Barbour. New York. D. Appleton & Co.

The Boys' Book of Amusements. By A. Frederick Collins. New York. D. Appleton & Co.



THE BEACON CLUB

THE EDITOR'S POST BOX

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

623 HUMBOLDT ST.,
DENVER, COLO.

Dear Editor: I am ten years old and in the sixth grade of the Carona School, which is in Denver, Colorado. I go to the Unitarian Sunday school and get *The Beacon*. My favorite story is "The Cat and the Captain." I follow it regularly and enjoy it very much. I missed out one Sunday as our Sunday school did not get their *Beacons*.

Our class is called the Charles W. Eliot Class. There are only boys in it, so next Sunday we are going on a hike in the mountains.

I should like very much to belong to the Beacon Club and wear the button.

Your new member,
HOLBROOK MAHN.

414 BERLIN ST.,
CLINTON, MASS.

Dear Editor: I should like to become a member of the Beacon Club and wear its pin. I am eleven years of age. I go to the First Unitarian Church of Clinton, Mass. Our minister is Rev. James C. Duncan. My Sunday-school teacher's name is Mrs. Hillner. There are five children in my class, all girls like myself. We are studying "Heroic Lives." We also get *The Beacon* every Sunday and like it very much. I like to read the stories and all the letters.

Yours sincerely,
MADALEINE GENTSCH.

31 HIGH ST.,
WINCHENDON, MASS.

Dear Editor: I go to the Unitarian church in Winchendon. I read *The Beacon* every Sunday and enjoy the letters that the boys and girls write. Miss Corey is my Sunday-school teacher. I am twelve years old. I should like to belong to the Beacon Club and wear its pin.

Sincerely yours,
EDITH DAVIS SMITH.

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.
OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.
OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

39 WORTHINGTON RD.,
BROOKLINE, MASS.

Dear Editor: We are brother and sister, aged eight. We are twins, you see. We live in Brookline which is a small suburb of Boston. We live in a fine brick house, with three elevators, a dumb-waiter, and an electric washing machine! Isn't that nice? We both are lovers of Sunday school and we go regularly. We read *The Beacon* every Sunday.

We have a little dog with three white spots on his tail; his name is "Spotty." We have a little black kitten; her name is "Blacky."

Our Mama thinks we are a pretty boy and girl and when we are dressed up we think so, too. We both have blue eyes and red hair, and we use Forhan's tooth-paste to make our teeth nice and clean and white.

We would like to belong to The Beacon Club which is the Club that goes with this magazine. We would like some children to write to us.

Lots of love from
ROTHWELL SWEETSER FIDDLEBAUM
ELMIRA JEWETT FIDDLEBAUM.

Box 61, WILTON, N. H.

Dear Editor: I get *The Beacon* every Sunday and enjoy it very much. I have twenty-one letters from different Beacon girls. I hope some girl will write to me and give me her picture.

Sincerely yours,
FRANCILIA MASON.

The Doctor and the Dose

BY DOROTHEA H. EICK

"Just let me see your tongue,—Ah, thanks;

Your busy tail is still;
Your glossy nose is warm and dry,
Your appetite is—nil?"

"That's so," said Tim, the Terrier,
"I'm sick and sad and ill;
The dose to make me merrier
Would be a sugar pill."

PUZZLERS

Enigma

I am composed of 13 letters.
My 9, 5, 2, 13 is an animal.
My 10, 5, 7 is to unite with a needle and thread.
My 1, 12, 9, 11 is a due.
My 6, 2, 3, 11, 5, 13, 3 is a light.
My 13, 4, 9 is a bone in the body.
My 3, 8, 7, 10 is a recent account.
My *whole* was a famous statesman.
MARGARET BANCROFT.
Tyngsboro, Mass.

Hidden Girls Names

1. Does she lend indiscriminately?
2. After I fell ill I answered her letter.
3. She complained to Alec at her inequality to him in earning power.
4. Those are the prettiest towels I ever made.
5. He plays a little on a banjo now.
6. It was a somber Thanksgiving for them.
7. Never again will I speak like that!
8. He will develop all films free next week.
9. You must get up early if you leave by six.
10. There are no rabbits in this garden.
11. I am Eli Allen who formerly lived here.
—Firelight.

Answers to Puzzles in No. 33

Enigma.—Helpfulness.

More Twisted Birds.—1. Bluebird.
2. Sparrow. 3. Robin. 4. Ovenbird.
5. Crow. 6. Blue Jay. 7. Chickadee.

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